

Mayor's Award for Historic Preservation

Shari Thornes

Mary McClure Bibby Lifetime Achievement Award



The Brookings Historic Preservation Commission is honored to present the Mary McClure Bibby Lifetime Achievement Award to Shari Thornes for 34 years of dedicated service to historic preservation in the City of Brookings. This award is named in honor of Mary McClure Bibby, a prominent political leader who served with President HW Bush as the first woman Speaker of the house in SD, and was an active historic preservationist at the community, state, and national levels. Mary was a transformative member of the Historic Preservation Commission from 2004 until her death in 2016. She was actively involved in historic preservation behind the scenes on a variety of fronts. Individuals receiving this award are recognized as champions of historic preservation, planning, or public policy in the City of Brookings.-

1985 was a pivotal year for historic preservation in the state of South Dakota, the City of Brookings, and for Shari Thornes. In that year, South Dakota created its historic preservation program, Certified Local Governments (CLG). This program, in partnership with the National Park Service under the National Historic Preservation Act, allowed the city of Brookings to create the Brookings Historic Preservation Commission--one of the first CLGs in SD. It was then that Shari Thornes, a newly hired City Engineer and Health Department staff member, became actively involved in Brookings' historic preservation initiative.

In 1986 Shari took over the Brookings historic preservation program as part of her role as the Research and Program Coordinator for the Mayor's Office. In that position, and future roles with the City, she worked tirelessly and passionately, supporting Brookings' historic preservation efforts through writing

grants, hiring and managing consultants, conducting a citywide survey of historic resources, engaging volunteers, facilitating property visits between historic home and building owners and the State Historic Preservation Office, advocating for threatened historic properties, and supporting public education initiatives. During her 34 year career, she facilitated the acceptance of 23 individually listed properties onto the National Register of Historic Places and oversaw the establishment of four National Register Historic Districts, consisting of over 400 historic properties in the Central Residential, University Residential, Commercial, and Sexauer Seed districts. Additionally, she assisted the BHPC with the creation of the City's first Historic Preservation Plan including hosting town hall meetings to define crucial issues for Brookings residents, developing Local Historic District procedures, writing local and state historic preservation legislation, assisting local preservation partners, and providing input on city policies, issues, and activities affecting the protection and enhancement of Brookings' historic resources. Also amongst her many accomplishments is a 3+ year project she facilitated alongside BHPC members, SHPO staff, and Frank Gilbert, the senior attorney for the National Trust for Historic Preservation. This project developed and enacted a new historic preservation ordinance for the City of Brookings, which was subsequently adopted by the State Historic Preservation Office as the Model Ordinance for other CLGs.

Over the years, Shari has initiated and coordinated countless educational efforts to include house and street signage projects, over 50 public workshops, walking and bus tours, a school workbook, historic homeowner welcome packets, photo documentation, the *Brookings Register "Picture This"* series, the *Brookings Preservationist* newsletter, travelling educational and photo exhibits, scavenger hunts, and the creation of nine published educational brochures and maps. Most recently, Shari was responsible for the implementation of the "Historic Sites on Bikes" event, the Festival of Lights trolley tours, the Brookings Bonanza, a sustainability poster series, and presenting a lecture on community engagement at the National Alliance of Preservations Commissions Conference. Also at the forefront of her recent achievements is her role as the City's ADA Coordinator, during which she organized training workshops on how accessibility can be achieved in historic structures. She also guided the redesign of historic properties into spaces that were accessible to all--most recently, the Community Cultural Center.

With the support and leadership of former Mayor Gail Robertson, she organized the Mayors' Awards. The Mayor's Awards Program has recognized 119 property owners, individuals, and organizations for their contributions to historic preservation since its creation in 1986. Shari further developed the Awards Program into the community event it is today by incorporating the sustainability, human rights, and disability awards programs.

On a statewide level, Shari worked closely with the State Historic Preservation Office leadership and staff and has served as a member on the South Dakota Historic Foundation Board since 1985, organized and hosted statewide preservation commission training, developed and hosted a statewide accredited realtor workshop, and hosted regional workshops featuring national preservation experts to include Donovan Rypkema, John Leeke, Bob Yapp, Pratt Cassidy, and others.

Shari also actively participated in regional and national preservation organizations, developing historic preservation contacts across the country. Her commitment to the cause is such that she has even been known to visit preservation officials while on vacation in other states for the sole purpose of making contacts that would further her efforts back in her hometown. This level of dedication and passion has resulted in Brookings receiving national recognition, starting in 2005 when Brookings was named a "Preserve America" community--one of only 28 in the nation to receive this coveted designation, which was established under President George W. Bush to support community efforts to preserve and honor our country's cultural and natural heritage. As part of this achievement, Shari and former Mayor Scott

Munsterman traveled to Washington, D.C. to accept the national award from the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Additionally, just last year, the City of Brookings was presented with a Best Practices Award for Public Outreach and Advocacy by the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions in 2018. This award recognized the Brookings Historic Preservation Commission for partnering with the Sustainability Council, Public Arts Commission, and Bicycle Advisory Committee in order to highlight the city's history and historic buildings and demonstrate shared goals, all of which was organized under Shari's leadership.

Shari's lifelong passion has left a lasting impact on historic preservation in Brookings. There is absolutely no doubt that her exemplary and unwavering dedication to establishing ordinances, creating and implementing plans, protecting and preserving properties, and coordinating an army of volunteers will extend far beyond the already remarkable 30 years she spent in selfless service to the City of Brookings. To imagine where our city would be today without Shari Thornes is to imagine an entirely different place altogether. She is as much an integral part of the fabric of Brookings as any of its beloved historic buildings, and for that, we honor her with this award.